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TUDOR JENKS • AN ISLAND QUEEN.



HE Princess was peerlessly beautiful and acknowledged that she was eighteen, and, since some twenty thousand subjects had celebrated her birthday, there is little doubt about her age.

She had hitherto contented herself with the ordinary routine of the court, standing up at receptions when that was the proper thing to do, and sitting down at banquets when the Mistress of Ceremonies informed her that such was the conduct demanded of her, by royal etiquette. But having now reached her majority, and being informed that the regents had decided that she ought to assume the reins of Empire, she concluded it was time she should begin to assert herself. She had been carefully and rigorously educated, and, though both parents had departed this life by means of a bomb when the Princess was yet in short dresses, she had been so carefully trained that no change in the price of public securities accompanied the announcement that she was to be formally crowned.

The coronation ceremony was a great success, and the Princess looked as pretty as a peach in her long blue velvet gold-corded gown supported by eight pages. Her beautiful hair was almost as regal (so said the *Court Gazette*) as the crown that eclipsed it, and the rejoicings of the populace were proved by so much gunpowder that the air smelled of saltpeter for a week.

Consequently, when she called her first meeting of her royal advisers, the old gentlemen who made up that body presented themselves in the council chamber in a placid state of mind, thinking mainly that the young queen was, æsthetically speaking, a great improvement upon the late regent, her uncle—a good but fussy old gentleman, who was nearly as stupid as he was honest.

The young queen, when the councilors were in place and attentive, rapped sharply upon the table in front of her, using the sceptre as a gavel, and having smashed the sceptre and secured silence, thus made her first speech from the throne :

“ My lords and gentlemen :

“ It has been customary, I understand, for your sovereign to address you, giving her views upon questions of state, and upon the state of the world generally. With this custom I am entirely unable to comply, since I know nothing of either.”

Here she was interrupted by a low murmur of disapproval.



The Queen.

Here the Prime Minister looked uncomfortable, while the Councilors snickered audibly. The Queen, however, went serenely on.

"I am fully aware that it has been usual for my predecessors of the same sex to govern in name only, while the actual authority rested in the hands of the ministers; but I am not willing to play the part of a figurehead in my own dominions. I believe I am right in assuming that in this, our realm, my power is practically absolute—since there is no constitutional limit to our authority. Am I right?"

"You are right," answered the Prime Minister, to whom the question seemed to be addressed.

"And, in that case, even if I should go so far as to depose all my present ministers and councilors, and appoint new ones, I would be within my powers?"

"Quite so," was the reply.

"It is well," said the queen. "Then do I here and now dismiss each and every one of you, and order the council chamber to be forthwith vacated!"

There was a pause of blank amazement, a confused murmur of conversation, and even some signs of resistance; but the young queen sat so majestically in her place that little by little the courage of the boldest ebbed away. In a few moments there began a general movement toward the door, and in a short time the queen occupied the council room alone. A smile of triumph curved the queen's lips, and she rapped sharply upon the table.

At once the side doors were thrown open, and the court ladies entered. As if prepared for the occasion, all took seats in the places of the deposed councilors, and the room blazed with beauty and animation.

"Fair sisters," said the queen, when the noise of their entrance was stilled, "I have dismissed the incompetents who have so long disgraced our realm. It remains to fill their places. Lady Alicia, will you take the portfolio of the Prime Minister, and kindly empty its contents into the waste-basket? Lady Clara, pray act similarly as to the portfolio of the Lord Treasurer, and Lady Diana, you will make a clearance in the department of Foreign Affairs."

Before many minutes the waste-basket was filled with an accumulation of ponderous trash, and all the cabinet portfolios were in the hands of their fair mistresses—all unmarried women of high rank.

"As for the army and navy," said the queen, we see no objection to allowing men to have these. There isn't likely to be any war—we shall arbitrate, of course—and the men are just delighted with uniforms. We will therefore appoint the Duke of Darlon, Minister of War, and the Duke of Vivian, Minister of Naval Affairs. The smaller officers can be chosen later—for we must leave plenty of time for the Coronation Ball."

“Oh, how lovely!” cried the councilors. “A coronation ball! And when?”

“To-night, of course,” said the queen. “I see no reason why we shouldn’t have a dance every night until we are tired of them.”

“Long live the queen!” was the cry, and the council hurried away to prepare dresses for the evening.

II.

HE ball was a great success, and for some weeks all went merry as a marriage-bell. The gayeties of the court caused a tremendous stimulation of all trades; wages rose, times were prosperous, and even the men excluded from the government made no complaint. As the offices had been filled by young ladies of the aristocracy, most of the dismissed officials were consoled by seeing the revenues of their offices paid into the hands of wives or daughters, and devoted themselves to business or speculation.

As the kingdom was an island, it was some weeks before the Secretary of Foreign Affairs had anything to do. And when dispatches arrived, she answered them herself in a handwriting that slanted so that no one could read it, besides crossing her lines and inserting parentheses and postscripts until several aged diplomatists of other nations had paresis and strabismus and heartfailure, which caused more delays.

The Treasury department, owing to the good times, had no difficulty in collecting money. Taxes were cheerfully paid from overflowing purses, and the money so collected was spent so rapidly that it was never long out of circulation.

At first the editors of the newspapers tried the policy of pointing with alarm to the future; but the queen promptly subsidized a number of administration organs, putting women in charge, and the new papers soon drove into bankruptcy such of the old as had not the address to come over to the support of the new regime.

At the end of the first year of her reign, the queen summoned the ladies of her council, and was able to offer them her hearty congratulations upon the state of the kingdom:

“Noble Ladies:

“After a year of unexampled prosperity,” (cheers) “we enter with assurances of success upon another era of government by the practical sex.” (Hear, hear!) “Lady Alicia, the Prime Minister, informs me that, while she has not had time to prepare a report,—she is busy with her house-cleaning and dress making,—everything is all right. There is practically no opposition party, except a few men whose envious machinations I notice only to pillory!” (Screams of diversion.) “Nothing much has happened, except a number of propositions for the royal hand,” (sensation,) “which have been scornfully rejected.” (Cheers.)

"Lady Clara, our Treasurer, says that she has lots of money, and what the men used to do with it all, she says she can't imagine. In order to provide even a larger revenue, she proposes now to double the tax on liquors, cigars, clubs and things like that, which will also enable her to take the tax off of cologne, tea and similar necessities.

"In short, everything is just lovely, and I invite you all to a five-o'clock tea in the royal palace."

The assembly dissolved with little shrieks of enthusiasm and exclamations of "Isn't she just a darling!" and similar expressions of loyalty and admiration.

Meanwhile a meeting of another tenor was being held in the War Department, where with closed doors some of the younger men of the Kingdom were considering an ultimatum which had just been received by the Duke of Darlon.

"They give us, gentlemen," said the young Duke, "thirty-six hours in which to accede to their demands, at the expiration of which period their fleet will surround the island and begin a bombardment."

"And," said the Duke of Vivian, "since we have had no naval appropriation this year, I need hardly inform you that we have not the means to resist them."

"What do they demand?" asked another of the men.

"I haven't the faintest idea," admitted the Duke of Darlon. "I asked both Lady Alicia and Lady Diana what claims the emperor was presenting, and they said that they really hadn't had time to read the dispatches; they told me it would probably blow over; that it was all talk, and that we would better arbitrate."

"As I have a friend who is connected with parties interested in pushing the demand," said the Duke of Vivian, "I am able, unofficially, to throw some light upon the matter. He tells me that no interest has been paid upon our bonds for over a year, and that when their Ambassador went to ask the queen the cause of the default, she sent word that she was not at home to anybody. So he asked for his passports, but couldn't get them because the Lady Diana and the Lady Alicia said they couldn't bother. Of course that was an insult which couldn't be brooked; the Ambassador sailed a week ago, and the ultimatum arrived this morning."

"The whole trouble," said the Duke of Darlon, "is the young Queen. All the rest of the women could be managed easily enough if they didn't have the royal backing. So long as she is ready to support them, they will keep on giving balls, picnics, tea-fights and muffin-worries, even if the whole kingdom goes to rack and ruin. The Emperor, of course, doesn't know what a state we're in here under petticoat government, and he can't resist the bondholders. Besides, if the Ambassador was insulted, there is a good *casus belli*. What we need is a little time—time for a *coup d'etat* or something."

"I'd cry treason," said the Duke of Vivian, grimly, "if I didn't agree with you. What we need just now is the advice of a fairy-godmother."

"It is my opinion," remarked the late poet-laureate, who, queerly enough, was a man of some sense, "that there is a little fairy-godfather who can help us out of this fix in short order. If Dan Cupid could be summoned, it wouldn't be long before the stars in their courses would smile upon us once more."

"By which mixed metaphor you mean—" said the Duke of Vivian, inquiringly.

"I mean that if I was the Duke of Darlon, I'd lay siege to the young queen, and bring about a *coup du cœur* that would make the *coup d'état* superfluous," said the poet-laureate.

"Nonsense," said the Duke of Darlon.

"I think he's right," the Minister of the Navy insisted. "There's no fairy like the son of Venus. And the queen herself appointed you."

"She wouldn't hear me," said the Duke of Darlon.

"Ask her," was the reply.

"I've no objection in the world," the Duke of Darlon declared, after a few moments' reflection. "I believe it is my duty to my country—if you think I'm the best man."

"No doubt of it," said the Duke of Vivian.

"But there isn't any of the Prince Consort about me," declared the Duke of Darlon firmly. "If I marry the queen, we reign together. You may send to the Emperor, tell him how we are situated, gain a little time—a week ought to settle it, one way or the other—and I will do my best."

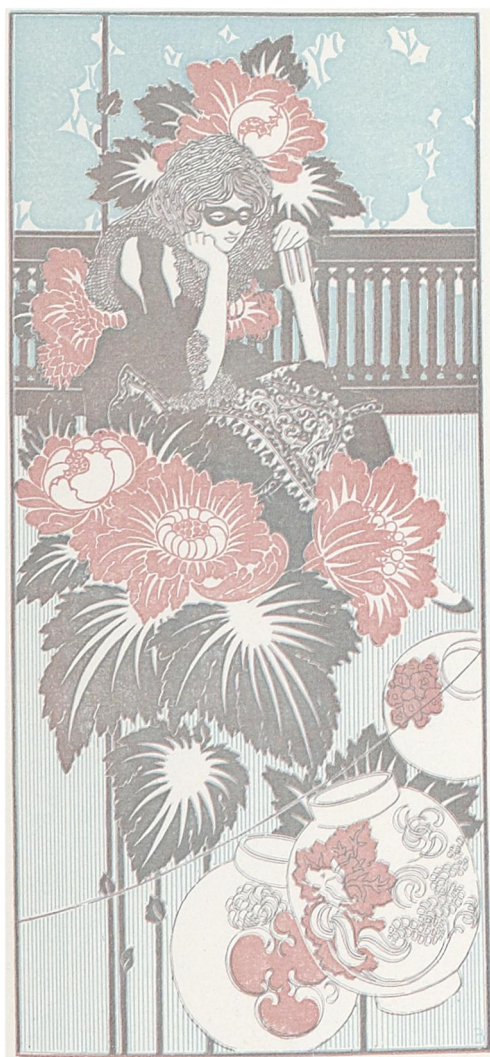
"Good!" exclaimed the Minister of the Navy. "I have one dispatch-boat that can still make a fair rate of speed. I'll go myself, get an armistice of a week or ten days, and during that time you must hazard all."

After a few more words the conspirators separated; the poet-laureate to write an epithalamium, the Minister of the Navy to board the dispatch-boat, and the Duke of Darlon to prepare for the campaign.

III.



HERE was a grand masquerade-ball at the Palace. The grounds were lighted with a myriad or two of Chinese lanterns—paid for out of the Treasury secret-service fund; rare exotics were as common as they were rare; brass-bands filled every other grove; string-bands were inserted in the interstices of the brass-bands; boats illuminated by colored lights flitted to and glided fro over the mirror-like expanse of the royal lakes; booths where iced drinks competed with nougat and neapolitaine were frequent, and chicken-salads were to be had at a gesture.



"As common as they were rare."

Fair women in the guise of gypsies, nuns, nereids, graces, and assorted nondescripts went sinuously about, flinging gay repartees over curved shoulders, and flirting fans as easily as they had managed the affairs of state.

It was a function—and never had a more successful ball taken place upon the royal grounds.

The queen, habited as a Spanish *Senorita*, half concealed in her rich mantilla, was ensconced in a conservatory where rich orchids swung aloft and flowers of the most delicate perfume gave a delicious fragrance to the air.

She was alone. She had withdrawn from the scene of gayety without, and sat thoughtfully gazing downward, her damask cheek resting on her *roseleaf* palm. In such an attitude a woman awaits her lover.

So, at least, thought the Duke of Darlon, who, in a rich *Toreador* costume, had been keeping his weather-eye out for just such a chance. "It's neck or nothing!" he remarked to himself, and, taking a brace, he advanced into the conservatory.

"Shall I intrude, fair *Senorita*?" he asked, pausing respectfully at the door.

"Enter," replied the queen languidly. She had not removed her mask, and felt secure from discovery.

The Duke entered the conservatory, advanced to the queen, sank gracefully upon one knee, and taking her hand raised it to his lips.

"You know me?" said the queen, quickly.

"Certainly, Your Highness," said the Duke. "Your face may be disguised, but not your queenly bearing. I have followed you all the evening."

"And why?" asked the queen.

"In hope that I might attain this moment of joy," said the Duke. "You are alone and unattended. In the court, I am kept from you; you are watched every instant. Only at such a time and in such a place can I dare to lay before you my heart's devotion! Royal Mistress, were you indeed the *Senorita* you seem, and were I the *Toreador*, I would crave from your lips an answer to the question that springs unbidden to mine. You know I love you!"

"Yes,—I know," answered the queen, in a low, tender voice.

"And—my own one, my queen—can you care for me a little? May I hope that if the obstacles to our union can be removed—"

"What obstacles?" asked the queen, still with her face averted.

"Why—er—reasons of state, you know. Your cabinet may object, or—"

"My cabinet object?" exclaimed the queen, "my cabinet object?—that parcel of women! I'd just like to see

them try it ! Object, indeed ! Why, I'd send them kiting ! ”

“ Then you do care for me a little ? ” asked the Duke.

“ Fergus,” said the queen calmly, “ you are rather slow.”

The Duke rose to his feet and extended his arms eagerly. But the queen waved him back.

“ Not yet,” said the queen, with a smile ; “ first I must know what you are asking. Do you apply for the place of Prince Consort ? ”

“ I ? ” said the Duke, dropping his arms to his sides. “ No, madam. If I marry you, I share your throne.”

“ And can you find enough supporters to assure your accession ? ” asked the queen earnestly.

“ Yes,” said the Duke. “ If you consent—we'll do the rest.”

“ Oh, Fergus, dear,” said the queen throwing herself into his arms, “ I am so glad to find a real man in the Kingdom ! I was beginning to think there wasn't one left. You were my last hope ! ”

“ There, there, my child, don't cry,” said the Duke. “ I'll take care of you. Did she begin to get tired of it all—poor little thing ! ”

And in the distance could be heard the soft notes of a string-band playing—was it ?—yes—playing “ Annie Laurie.”

IV.



THE next meeting of the Queen's Council was a short one. The Duke of Darlon appeared before the noble Ladies, as Queen's Messenger, and read a very short proclamation :

“ Noble Ladies :

“ We have decided to marry the Duke of Darlon, who will conjointly reign with us. Such is the royal pleasure. Your council is hereby dissolved, and the Duke will appoint a new one. You will therefore disperse peaceably to your homes,” (cries of “ Shame ! ” “ Treason ! ”) “ and prepare for the Royal Wedding,” (cheers) “ at which you will all act as bridesmaids.” (Tumultuous and rapturous ovation, with a tendency to hysterics.) “ And I hope you will wear the very finest gowns that ever were seen ! ”

There was more, but it was never read. The councilors suddenly remembered that there might be a corner in dress-makers, and there began a rush for the door. Soon the room was tenanted only by the Duke of Darlon, who slowly rolled up the parchment, after kissing the queen's autograph with more than royal fervor.

Placing the proclamation in his inside pocket, the Duke remarked, “ What rum coves they are ! ” and returned to his royal mistress to report the complete success of his mission.

When the Duke of Vivian returned he reported that his mission also had been completely successful,

"In fact," said he, "the Emperor told me that the whole ultimatum was a fake. He said that when the Ambassador told him what was going on here, he came to the conclusion that a declaration of war would probably smash the whole scheme. But he wants us to settle with the bondholders."

"After the wedding, we will," said the Duke of Darlon.

It was a gorgeous wedding; and after it was over, the Duke of Vivian put a piece of the royal cake under his pillow, and he dreamt about the Lady Alicia; and people say—

But who cares what people say?

GEIK TURNER • IN AN OLD LIBRARY.



ERE in the dusk of this dim-windowed
hall

The weary minds of generations rest;
Poor prisoner ghosts, by sad neglect
oppressed,
In dismal companies along the wall;
Long phantom lines of poets and of
seers,

Their songs grown cold, their raptures heeded not
And all their wisdom, wearily begot,
Turned foolish through forgotten years.

Fair summers that will never come again,
They wasted out with trouble prodigal,
And springs and falls and winters beautiful,
That here might rest in store for careless men
The hoarded ignorance of time. Alas,
What perishable fruit their labors bore;
The hungry crowds go roaring by their door,
Nor wait one moment as they pass.

Across their prison-house the creeping sun
Dials the endless days upon the floor;
The crafty spider binds them o'er and o'er
With fetters that may never be undone.
Oh, for the days they lost in labor vain.
Here in the dusk all moulder silently,
Save when across the panes some prisoner bee
Raves for his open fields again.

Raves for the sky, the meadows and the trees;
Wild with the dark, frantic with mad distrust
Of this dim place of weariness and dust.
Round him the great of out-spent centuries
In gaunt procession listen silently—
Dead oracles no questioner comes to seek;
Their words, which woke the world, now grown more weak
Than the shrill droning of a frightened bee,